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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7181

INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS

RUEHJA/ISLAMIC CONFERENCE COLLECTIVE

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4525

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1640

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1182

RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2069

RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 0898

RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JAKARTA 003257

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FOR EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, DRL/IL, DRL/PHD  
DOL FOR ILAB:BSASSER  
NSC FOR EPHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2017

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINS ELAB ID IR

SUBJECT: INDONESIAN LABOR LEADER TAKES CAMPAIGN TO IRAN

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Classified By: DepPol/C Stanley J. Harsha, reasons 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. "Captain Jack Sparrow" of the Indonesian labor movement, Hanafi Rustandi, head of the Seafarers Union, carried out a daring foray into Iran October 7-11, in an attempt to secure medical treatment and freedom for an imprisoned Iranian labor leader, Mansour Osanloo. Nearly detained after meeting with underground labor activists and participating in a public demonstration, Hanafi's mission helped Osanloo get an eye operation on October 21 to save him from blindness. This case demonstrated how Indonesia's democratic labor movement is spreading its wings to promote freedom of association in repressive regimes. Meanwhile, on November 1, Indonesian labor turned its attention to Burma, sending a strongly worded letter to the Secretary General of ASEAN to press the Burmese regime to halt repression. END SUMMARY

ONLY INDONESIAN WILLING TO TAKE THE RISK

¶2. (C) Brutal detentions of Mansour Osanloo began in May 2005 when he organized the Tehran Bus Workers' Union and was elected its President. He was most recently snatched by authorities on July 10 while distributing leaflets on a bus, and severely beaten in front of passengers. This detention occurred soon after his meeting with international labor organizations in London and Brussels. President of the Indonesian Seafarers Union Hanafi Rustandi became very involved in the case in his role as the Indonesian coordinator of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), which is supporting the case of Osanloo and other imprisoned Iranian transport workers, according to Jamie Davis, Indonesia Program Director for Solidarity Center (affiliated with AFL-CIO). Approximately 500 Indonesian ITF activists had protested in front of the Iranian Embassy on August 9.

¶3. (C) ITF chose Hanafi to travel to Iran to try to secure Osanloo's medical treatment and release from Tehran's notorious Evin Prison, because as a Muslim he would face less danger, Hanafi told LabAtt, adding that he also was the only one willing to take on this mission. Hanafi publicly called

this visit "a test case for the friendship between our two Muslim countries." Hanafi met with the Iranian ambassador -- who Hanafi said endorsed his visit -- to try to get the correct visa, but ultimately had to enter Tehran with a visa on arrival. Hanafi traveled with Indonesian Trade Union Congress (SPSI) Secretary General Syukur Sarto. On arrival in Tehran on October 7, the pair told immigration officials they were on a Muslim pilgrimage to holy sites.

¶4. (C) Hanafi met clandestinely that same Sunday with the wives and families of Osanloo and another detained syndicate leader, Ebrahim Madadi, bus union vice president, in the home of Osanloo's mother-in-law, Hanafi told us. Osanloo's wife, Parvenah, told Hanafi she had visited Osanloo three times in prison but was not allowed visual contact. Parvenah said Osanloo would go permanently blind within a few weeks - a result of his May 2005 beating by authorities -- if not operated on right away. (Note: Reuters reported on November 1 that an Iranian court sentenced Osanloo to five year in jail, citing a judiciary official, for "distributing statements against the system.") Hanafi also met with labor activists that same day in a meeting held at the Indonesian embassy.

#### MEETING WITH UNDERGROUND ACTIVISTS

¶5. (C) The following day, Hanafi met clandestinely with 60 underground syndicate leaders at a private home. Hanafi told Labatt that he was not scared because being a labor activist under the repressive Suharto regime had hardened him to threats. Hanafi said this meeting was a rare opportunity for Iranian labor activists to express themselves freely, and they called for Iran to abide by International Labour Organization (ILO) 87, which Iran has ratified, allowing for freedom of association. (Note: ILO has sent a formal protest note to the Iranian government over their crackdown

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on labor, according to Davis). Iran's Muslim law forbids all formation of unions, Hanafi said.

#### IRANIANS, LIKE INDONESIANS, PRACTICE LIBERAL ISLAM

¶6. (C) On October 8, Hanafi met with university activists, almost all women, who spoke out fervently for a change in regime and return of freedom - while puffing on cigarettes despite the fact that it was fasting month. On October 9, Hanafi gave a press conference at his hotel, the Intercontinental, attended by international media and Iranian press. An article was published in the Farzi press. The next day he was invited to a university professor's home to meet with leading intellectual dissidents. He also met with several other underground syndicates that day, including building workers, painters and teachers. At all his meetings, Muslims ate and drank, practicing a liberal Islam which made Hanafi feel at home as a liberal Indonesian Muslim. He said the his interlocutors told him that Persians are united against the regime.

#### HANAFI CENTER OF PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION

¶7. (C) Activists next whisked Hanafi off to the Ministry of Labor to join a demonstration by 50 bus driver syndicate members, demanding a meeting for Hanafi with the Minister of Labor to call for Iranian implementation of ILO 87. Ministry staff came outside to plead with Hanafi to leave because if he were arrested, they could not help him. Finally, four burly guards told him he could either accompany them inside or take a taxi to his hotel. Hanafi chose the safer option of leaving. The bus syndicate subsequently convinced Hanafi and Syukur sign their demand letter, written in Farzi, which they faxed to the ministry right after the pair departed Iran.

#### CLOSE CALL AT THE AIRPORT

¶8. (C) Ready to depart Iran on October 11, Hanafi said the

Indonesian Embassy agreed to escort his lower profile colleague, Syukur, to the airport, but that Hanafi was on his own, since he had publicly violated the terms of his visa. At the airport, M-16 toting Iranian Revolutionary Guards interrogated Hanafi in a private room, asking him why he met with syndicates. Hanafi told them he came to Iran merely to look into Osanloo's welfare. He was released in time to catch his plane. An hour after Hanafi departed, a Japanese activist was arrested, Hanafi said.

¶9. (C) The ITF touted Hanafi's visit in its press releases and on October 16 released a short film, "Freedom Will Come - The Story of Mansour Osanloo." Osanloo is still in prison but ITF got confirmation that the eye operation did take place on October 20, according to an ITF press release. Meanwhile, Hanafi went on Indonesian national station TVRI after his return challenging the Iranian ambassador to a televised debate on the treatment of Osanloo.

¶10. (C) And Hanafi is not stopping with Iran. On October 30, Hanafi called a meeting of ITF affiliates which approved a letter signed by Hanafi to ASEAN Secretary General Ong Keng Yong, asking ASEAN to pressure the Burmese regime. The letter stated, "We request that ASEAN and its member states...exercise their important influence (to make) every effort to persuade the rulers of Burma to cease all violence and repression against their people, and to enter on the path of broad social and political dialogue...towards a peaceful transition to genuine democracy." Copies were sent to Indonesian President Yudhoyono and to the embassies of the ASEAN members. Hanafi is considering organizing a labor demonstration at the Burmese Embassy.

#### LABOR MOVEMENTS BOLSTER DEMOCRACY

¶11. (C) Solidarity Center's Jamie Davis told Labatt that this case demonstrates how Indonesia's free and strong labor movement is crucial not only in bolstering democracy in Indonesia but worldwide. It also shows how important the Iranian labor movement will be in promoting democracy.

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